**Name**

**Date**

**Hour**

**Teacher**

***The Circuit* Discussion Questions**

**Directions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.**

**Chapter 1: “Under the Wire” (pages 1-7)**

1. What does *la frontera* mean and what is the significance of it in the story?
2. What is the setting of the book?
3. Where is the family headed? What does Fito tell them about this place? How are they traveling?
4. The story is told from what point of view? Who is the main character?
5. Name the members (4 so far) in the Jiménez family.
6. What does *la migra* mean and what is the significance of it in the story?
7. What do the boys watch every day at noon? What does the conductor give them?

**Chapter 2: “Soledad” (pages 8-11)**

1. What does *soledad* mean? Why is it significant to this chapter? (Hint: Look at the last paragraph of the chapter.)
2. What is Francisco’s job while his parents and brother work in the fields?
3. Who is Trampita and how old is he?
4. What does Francisco do for the first time? Why does he do this?
5. Why are his mother and father disappointed?

**Chapter 3: “Inside Out” (pages 12-21)**

1. At the beginning of the chapter, what is Francisco asking Roberto about? Why doesn’t he ask his parents?
2. Where was the family picking cotton? Where are they now?
3. What month is it when the brothers start school? Why might this be significant? Do you see any problems with this? Why or why not?
4. Who is Mr. Sims? Miss Scalapino? Curtis? Arthur?
5. What does Francisco watch in the jar?
6. What does Mr. Sims give Francisco? What happens as a result?
7. What does Francisco get a first prize blue ribbon for? What does he do with his picture? Why?

**Chapter 4: “Miracle in Tent City” (pages 22-35)**

1. How does Mamá help pull her weight, even when she is pregnant? What about the boys?
2. What does Papá make? What does Mamá use the box for? What does this tell you about them?
3. Where do the brothers go to get lumber for the floor? What does this tell you about the family’s economic status?
4. What do you think this quote says about Francisco’s view of education: “I collected books, hoping to read them once I learned how” (24)? What does Francisco find out when he gets his report card?
5. Is Francisco’s family religious? How do you know?
6. Who/What do you think cured Torito? (Doña María? Praying to el Santo Niño? The blue cloak Francisco saw in his dream and Mamá sewed for Torito? A combination of any or all? Something else?) What do you think the family believes?

**Chapter 5: “El Angel de Oro” (pages 36-41)**

1. What is the weather like and why does this pose a problem for the family?
2. What does el Angel de Oro mean and what is it?
3. Who does Francisco meet?
4. What do they do together?
5. Why doesn’t Miguelito meet Francisco?
6. What does Francisco try to do for the dying gray fish? Does he succeed?
7. Why do you think he leaves the last gray fish he rescued on the doorstep of his neighbor?
8. Why do you think Francisco let the fishing rod Miguelito made float down the river?

**Chapter 6: “Christmas Gift” (pages 42-46)**

1. Why is the family one of the last ones to leave Corcoran when other farmers had better crops? What does this tell you about Papá’s character?
2. How does the family eat while they have no work?
3. Describe how Francisco feels when his father says “I wish I could, paisano, but we’re broke too.”
4. What does Papá tell the couple who comes to sell things?
5. What do the kids get for Christmas? Are they happy about it? Are their parents happy about it? Why?
6. What does Papá give Mamá for Christmas? Why is this ironic?

**Chapter 7: “Death Forgiven” (pages 47-50)**

1. Describe El Perico (appearance, disposition, country of origin, former owner, etc.)
2. Why do you think Jiménez describes El Perico as “undocumented” (48), his former owner Don Pancho as “an undocumented farm worker” (47), and Chico and Pilar as “undocumented” (48)?
3. What happens to the “undocumented” parrot? What do you think Jiménez is trying to say here?
4. What does Francisco do every day after they bury El Perico?

**Chapter 8: “Cotton Sack” (pages 51-60)**

1. Why does Francisco’s father say that he cannot have a cotton sack?
2. Why can’t they pick cotton while it’s raining?
3. What ailment does Papá have?
4. Who is the fastest picker in the family?
5. Francisco says that “[he] was determined to prove to Papá that [he] should get [his] own sack” and that he is “grown-up enough for his own sack” (59). Does he prove himself or not? Explain.

**Chapter 9: “The Circuit” (pages 61-69)**

1. Why do you think the author includes one paragraph about the man from Jalisco, the state in Mexico where Francisco is from?
2. What is Francisco’s view of constantly moving?
3. Why do you think the Carcachita is talked about so much in this book?
4. Who speaks English in order to ask about work?
5. Where does the family stay?
6. Why do Roberto and Francisco hide in the grape vineyard?
7. When does Francisco finally enroll in sixth grade? Why can’t Roberto enroll in school until February?
8. What does Mr. Lema do for Francisco?
9. What happens the same day Mr. Lema offers to teach Francisco how to play the trumpet?

**Chapter 10: “Learning the Game” (pages 70-79)**

1. Francisco begins counting down to what day, which is 132 days away?
2. What game do Francisco and the other boys play? Who decides who plays and who doesn’t? Why doesn’t this person want Manuelito to play?
3. Who is the new worker? Where is his family?
4. How many hours do Francisco, Roberto, Papá, and Gabriel work?
5. When Francisco and Gabriel are loaned out to a different sharecropper, what does the contratista (labor contractor) want Gabriel to do? Does Gabriel do it? Why or why not? What happens as a result?
6. What happens later that day when Francisco plays Kick-The-Can? What happens as a result? What does Carlos finally decide?

**Chapter 11: “To Have and to Hold” (pages 80-93)**

1. What are Francisco’s two most prized possessions?
2. What two pennies are most important to him? Why?
3. What happens the day that Francisco is supposed to show his coin collection to Carl?
4. What does Francisco think Orosi means?
5. Where did Francisco get his little blue notebook? What does Francisco write in his little blue notebook?
6. In Orosi at Mr. Patrini’s, what type of building does the family live in? Why is this significant?
7. What happens to Francisco’s coins?
8. What happens to Francisco’s librito? How does Mamá comfort him about it?

**Chapter 12: “Moving Still” (94-111)**

1. What is la migra?
2. Why does Francisco want to return to Santa Maria?
3. What class does Francisco excel at? What happens when he scores the highest on his quiz?
4. What does Mr. Sims, the principal, help Roberto get?
5. What is Francisco supposed to memorize for class? Does he get to recite it? Why or why not?
6. After reading this chapter and A Note from the Author, what do you think of Francisco’s Papá saying, “Education pays off, *mi’jo*. I am proud of you. Too bad your Mamá and I didn’t have the opportunity to go to school” (108). How do you think his parents view education? His siblings? How does he view it?